



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2013

Greg Slawson (858) 495-5358

## **TICKS TEST POSITIVE FOR TULAREMIA NEAR LOS PENASQUITOS CANYON** ***Hikers Urged to be Cautious and Use Insect Repellent When Hiking***

Several ticks trapped in routine monitoring near Los Penasquitos Canyon Preserve March 29 have tested positive for tularemia, also known as “rabbit fever,” San Diego County Department of Environmental Health officials said Tuesday.

The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say tularemia is a potentially dangerous illness that people can contract from infected animals such as rabbits and rodents in a number of ways — through direct contact with an infected animal; by drinking or inhaling contaminated water, dust or aerosols; or through “vectors,” pests such as ticks that bite an infected animal and then a person.

“We recommend that people use insect repellent, especially when hiking in brushy areas, to prevent ticks and other insects from biting them,” said DEH Director Jack Miller. “Flea and tick control products should also be used on pets.”

Dr. Wilma Wooten, County Public Health Officer, said tularemia cannot be transmitted from person-to-person and can be treated with antibiotics. However, Wooten said that the illness can be serious and even deadly in rare cases, and that people should consult their doctors immediately if they think they have contracted the disease.

“Symptoms in humans include lymph node swelling, headache and fever,” Wooten said. “Other symptoms include a skin ulcer at the site of the bite, fatigue, body aches and nausea.”

Miller said people can protect themselves from tick bites by following some simple rules:

- Stay on designated pathways, choose wide trails and walk in the center.
- Avoid grassy or brushy areas and do not handle wild rodents.
- Wear light-colored, long-sleeved clothing; tuck shirts into pants and pants into socks.
- Apply insect repellent to clothing and footwear.
- Check clothing, body and companions for ticks frequently.
- Leave pets at home or keep them on a leash. If they have not been already treated with a tick and flea regimen, use insecticide powders or sprays labeled for tick control.
- Carefully remove attached ticks immediately. Remove embedded ticks by grabbing them with tweezers as close to the insect’s head as possible and pulling out steadily and firmly.

If you develop symptoms within three weeks after visiting a tick-infested area, seek medical attention. Tell your doctor that you have recently been in a tick-infested area.

For more information about tularemia surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit the County [Vector Control website](#).

COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE  
1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 208 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101